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Turner Calls Soviet Policy 19th Century

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WASHINGTON — Adm. Stansfield Turner, the new director of central intelligence, views the Soviet Union as a power which clings to the 19th Century view that military superiority overcomes deficiencies in economy, technology and ideology.

"They want to be the dominant power in the world," Turner said. "They are trying to accentuate military power...and translate it into political advantage. In 19th Century terms, they are trying to use military superiority to overcome their other shortcomings."

Turner spoke to a breakfast meeting of reporters several hours before he was sworn into his dual post of director of central intelligence and director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the presence of President Carter, his classmate at the U.S. Naval Academy.

The admiral, whose last assignment was commander of North Atlantic Treaty Organization sea forces, also came out in favor of criminal penalties for Americans "leaking" secret information, but stopped short of including the publication of such information because he takes the pragmatic view that neither Congress nor the courts would do anything to affect the freedom of the press provision of the First Amendment to the Constitution.

In response to a question, Turner said he is "told by people in the intelligence community" there would be a danger to national security if former CIA Director Richard Helm were indicted by a grand jury and documents subpoenaed by the government or the defense.

Carter, in a news conference, leaned toward civil, rather than criminal penalties, for divulging secret information, and said any decision on the possible prosecution of Helms rests with the Department of Justice. But he said he would be the judge of whether to release CIA documents.

In his assessment of the Soviet Union and its intentions toward the United States, Turner said:

"They are well behind us economically and unlikely to close the gap; they are behind us technologically and working hard to close the gap; and behind us ideologically...their way is dying."

He added that Marxism in the Eastern European "satellite" countries shows varying types of communism, and the ideology is being challenged even with the Soviet Union itself.

The new intelligence chief said he has been promised "at will" access to the President and that he has the same responsibilities toward Vice President Walter F. Mondale as to Carter. He also pledged to be "as open as possible" with Congress and the public "within legal limits to protect methods and sources" of intelligence information.

Turner said he has met with Attorney General Griffin Bell on possible legislation to replace the 60-year-old Espionage Act with its antiquated wording, and that "six or seven bills" already have gone to Capitol Hill. The drive was sparked by recent publication of covert CIA payments to King Hussein of Jordan.

He said he is in the process of reviewing all payments to foreign governments to see if they can be made openly rather than covertly.

"The Government was hurt by this (publication)," Turner said. "The sense of confidence — not only that Jordan but the rest of the world could do business with us on a limited-information basis — has been shattered...I have been trying to find the leak so we can get to the source..."

"What we need is that there be some effective way of discouraging people from releasing information."

Turner said he would divide his time equally between the CIA and the rest of the intelligence community.